What Do They Think of Me? A Comparison of US and Thai Students' Beliefs about Others' Perception of Their Facebook Life
พวกเขาคิดอย่างไรกับฉัน? การเปรียบเทียบความเชื่อของนักศึกษาอเมริกันและไทย เกี่ยวกับการรับรู้ของผู้อื่นที่มีต่อชีวิตของตนบนสื่อเฟซบุ๊ก

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Abstract

Facebook provides users a platform to present themselves to the world, a presentation that can be quite different from reality. An important unanswered question concerns the beliefs that users have about what others think of their Facebook online self—do they believe others have specific perceptions, perhaps positive or negative, of them as a result of observing their profile and postings? Four hundreds and ten students from two universities in the U.S. and Thailand participated in the survey. Using a 15-item semantic differential scale on self-presentation, we found that on every item, US students reported a greater discrepancy than Thai students between their real self and their online self, that is, US students always presenting themselves more positively on Facebook than their real self. Also, it was found that when students offered online presentations more favorable than their actual self, they tended to exhibit higher well-being. And finally, it was found that as the discrepancy between the way students presented themselves online and the way they were seen by others grew larger, they tended to report lower well-being scores.

Keywords: *Facebook, Social Media, Self-presentation, Well-Being*

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บทคัดย่อ

เฟซบุ๊กเปิดเวทีให้ผู้ใช้งานได้นำเสนอตนเองสู่ทุกมุมโลก ซึ่งการนำเสนอตัวตนดังกล่าวอาจแตกต่างไปจากชีวิตจริงของพวกเขา คำถามที่ยังไม่มีคำตอบนั้น เกี่ยวเนื่องกับความเชื่อของผู้ใช้เฟซบุ๊กในประเด็นการรับรู้ของผู้อื่นที่มีต่อชีวิตออนไลน์ของตนเอง นั่นคือ พวกเขาเชื่อหรือไม่ว่าผู้อื่นมีทัศนคติเฉพาะต่อตนเองในเชิงลบหรือเชิงบวก เป็นต้น และทัศนคติเช่นนั้นเป็นผลจากการสังเกตโปรไฟล์หรือโพสต์ต่างๆ ของพวกเขาใช่หรือไม่ นักศึกษาจำนวน 410 คนจาก มหาวิทยาลัย 2 แห่งในประเทศสหรัฐอเมริกาและประเทศไทยเข้าร่วมการวิจัยเชิงสำรวจ การศึกษาครั้งนี้ใช้มาตราวัดแบบ Semantic Differential เกี่ยวกับการนำเสนอตัวตนจำนวน 15 รายการ ผลการศึกษาพบว่า นักศึกษาอเมริกันมีผลคะแนนความคลาดเคลื่อนระหว่างชีวิตออนไลน์และชีวิตจริงสูงกว่านักศึกษาไทยในทุกรายการ นั่นคือ นักศึกษาอเมริกันมักนำเสนอตัวตนเชิงบวกบนสื่อเฟซบุ๊กมากกว่าชีวิตจริงเสมอ ผลการศึกษายังพบว่า ผู้ใช้เฟซบุ๊กที่นำเสนอตัวตนว่า ดีกว่าความเป็นจริงนั้น พวกเขามีแนวโน้มที่จะมีความผาสุกสูงตามไปด้วย และท้ายสุดการศึกษาพบว่า ยิ่งค่าความคลาดเคลื่อนระหว่างการนำเสนอตัวตนบนโลกออนไลน์และความเชื่อว่าผู้อื่นมองตนเองอย่างไรสูงขึ้น คะแนนความผาสุกก็ยิ่งลดน้อยลง

คำสำคัญ: *เฟซบุ๊ก สื่อสังคม การนำเสนอตัวตน ความผาสุก*

Introduction

Facebook has maintained its position as the world's most successful social networking site (SNS), reporting that its number of monthly active users had risen to 2.2 billion in the fourth quarter of 2017, a figure that surpassed the 2012 third quarter total of 1 billion (Statista, 2018a). A key aspect of Facebook's popularity is that users are able to present a running narrative and commentary on their lives, thus using the platform as a way of presenting themselves to the world. However, unlike the everyday world, personal details can be edited and shaped to create a self-image of one's own choosing, one that can be quite different from reality.

But how much discrepancy is there between users' real self and their online self? This study sought to examine a general population of young adults enrolled in college to discover how they perceive their everyday self and online self as opposed to their perceptions of how they are viewed by others. Unlike the majority of research on social media, which has tended to focus on social media users in the West, our study set out to offer a broader perspective, comparing users in Thailand and the US. In both these nations Facebook has been particularly popular among youth. According to Statista (2018b), the United States ranks second only to India in the number of Facebook users worldwide (230 million) and Thailand ranks eighth (51 million). A survey by Thailand's Ministry of Digital Economy and Society found that the residents aged 15-24, 85.9% were Internet users (National Statistical Office, 2016), and in the US, the Pew Research Center found that 92% of teens reported going online each day (Lenhart, 2015).

Online self-presentation

University-aged youth—those at the age of emerging adulthood—have been shown to be the most rapidly expanding portion of social media users (Henrikson, 2011). Individuals of this age tend to create large networks of social relationships (Collins & Laursen, 2004; Manago, Taylor, & Greenfield, 2012). For people in this age group, Facebook provides an easy means through which an extensive array of friends

can be formed and maintained. Facebook invites users to establish social networks by "befriending" other users. This is achieved by searching for potential friends, requesting to become friends, and accepting friending requests initiated by others. As time passes, users can accumulate many, perhaps hundreds, such friends (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2011; Magpanthong & McDaniel, 2015; Ong, et al., 2011).

Users develop their network of Facebook friends through presentations they make of themselves online. Those who have a greater need to be seen as "popular" tend to update their profiles more often in order to be seen as well-liked, and to engage in strategic self-presentation (Bareket-Bojmel, Moran, & Shahar, 2016; Utz, Tanis, & Vermeulen, 2012). Those who present themselves favorably on Facebook perceive themselves as receiving more positive feedback from their friends (Metzler & Scheithauer, 2017; Yang & Brown, 2016). However, personal presentations on social media seeking favorable responses inevitably raise questions of accuracy (Amichai-Hamburger & Vinitzky, 2010). Personality has been shown to play an important role in the kind of presentations users offer of themselves. As one might expect, extroverted personalities tend to present themselves more actively on Facebook, uploading photos and updating their status more frequently than introverts (Brailovskaia & Margraf, 2016; Lee, Ahn, & Kim, 2014; Seidman, 2013). Similarly, narcissism has been shown to be associated with active self-presentation, even in multi-national settings (Brailovskaia & Bierhoff, 2016; Ong, et al., 2011). But those who employ social media for self-promotion tend to use Facebook more intensively, possibly in unhealthy addictive ways (Blachnio, Przepiorka, Boruch, & Balakier, 2016; Buffardi & Campbell, 2008). Wright, White, and Obst (2018) suggested that two false self-presentation modes exist: lying on status updates and profiles and liking posts falsely. This study focused on the former.

Given such findings, it appears likely that another factor in users' modes of self-presentation would be their individual sense of life satisfaction. Self-esteem and well-being have been examined, looking specifically at inaccurate or unauthentic presentations of self on social media. Users having low self-esteem have been found to be more disposed to self-presentations on Facebook that deviate from their true self (Gil-Or, Levi-Belz, & Turel, 2015; Michikyan, Dennis, & Subrahmanyam, 2015). But overall findings on the association between online authenticity and well-being have been mixed. Although Reinecke and Trepte (2014) discovered a positive relationship between online authenticity and life satisfaction, Grieve and Watkinson (2016) found no correlation between the two. Indeed, studies generally have not produced consistent findings on the contributions of social media to users' sense of well-being. Some studies have found that heavy users of Facebook experienced low-esteem and declines in subjectively judged well-being (Kalpidou, Costin, & Morris, 2011; Kross et al., 2013). But other studies found an association between intensity of Facebook use and users' life satisfaction (Jung, Pawlowski, & Kim, 2017; Park, Kee, & Valenzuela 2009).

It seems reasonable that the self-presentation practices are substantially determined by the societies in which one is socialized. For example, it has been shown that individuals rated high in collectivistic attributes who are also low on extroversion disclosed the least honest and

the most audience-relevant information in an online environment (Chen & Marcus, 2012). This being the case, there are likely to be differences in the way one presents oneself to the world from country to country. For example, Köhl and Götzenbrucker (2015) discovered users in Thailand reported a greater willingness to disclose their personal emotions and views online than Austrian users. However, most research on social media has been based on North American or European Facebook users. Caers et al. (2013) observed that "it is striking how many articles are based on samples of US students" and proposed that "research on Facebook should be taken one step further, expanding research to multiple countries and settings and integrating research findings." This study sought to follow this approach.

Thailand is generally considered to have what has been termed a "collectivist" culture, one in which behavior is guided by group norms (Triandis, McCusker, & Hui, 1990). Such cultures emphasize conformity and the approval of others (Rhein & Sukawatana, 2015). This suggests that social media users in collectivist societies such as Thailand would reflect in their postings conformity to norms rather than to their authentic self, and these users would be closely attuned to the way others see their online presentations. The United States, on the other hand, is characterized as an "individualistic" society (Hamamura, 2012; Hofstede, 1980; Kim, Park, & Suzuki, 1990), where persons' Facebook postings might give preference to their own individual tastes, values, and behaviors over others' expectations.

The following hypotheses were therefore posed:

H1: Thai university students report greater discrepancy between their real self and their online self than US students.

H2: Thai university students report higher discrepancy between their real self and how others see them online than US students.

H3: Thai university students report higher discrepancy between their online self and how others see them online than US students.

H4: The discrepancy between users' real self and online self is positively associated with psychological well-being.

H5: The discrepancy between users' real self and how others see them online is negatively associated with psychological well-being.

H6: The discrepancy between users' online self and how others see them online is negatively associated with psychological well-being.

Methods

Students who were Facebook users were surveyed in a major metropolitan university in Bangkok, Thailand and a residential US university in the US. A power analysis using pretest data and employing the Cohen's d method and accepting a power of 0.85 with an effect size of 0.3, found that a total N-size of 200 would be needed at each of the two survey sites. Surveys were administered to students enrolled in lecture classes who had a Facebook account in the two universities. The final sample came to 410 participants consisting of 202 Thai (49.3%) and 208 US (50.7%) respondents. Among these participants, 206 (50.2%) were male, 204 (49.8%) were female and ages of respondents ranged from 18 to 28 years.

This study examined participants' self-presentations using semantic differential scales that assessed each respondent's real self, online self, and the self that they thought others understood them to be based on their online updates and postings which in this study is referred to as perceived self. The semantic differential scales were made up of 15 seven-point items based upon the work of Gosling, Rentfrow, and Swann (2003), Toma and Carlson (2012), and Toma and Carlson (2015). They were as follows:

Shy	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Outgoing
Reserved, not talkative	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Talkative
Unfriendly	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Friendly
Impolite	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Polite
Tense, serious	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Relaxed
Anxious, worried	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Calm
Unreliable	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Reliable
Unambitious	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Ambitious
Unadventurous	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Adventurous
Uncreative	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Creative
Not funny	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Funny
Unintelligent	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Intelligent
Shallow	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Deep
Physically unattractive	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Attractive
Unlikable	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Likable

Using these scales, participants were first asked to honestly rate themselves, second to rate themselves as they would like to present themselves on Facebook, and third to estimate how others would rate them based on the way they are seen on Facebook. For the semantic differential scales rating one's actual self, Cronbach's alpha was .842, for online self-

presentation it was .938, and for how others perceived them it was .892, all of which were deemed adequate for this study.

A tool commonly used to assess life satisfaction has been developed by Ryff (1989) and Ryff & Keyes (1995) defined as psychological well-being. This measure, consisting of an 18-item inventory made up of six-point Likert scales, each item gauging participants' judgments on their personal life qualities, was used in this study. In total, these assessed six dimensions of well-being—1) Individual self-acceptance; 2) Positive relations with others, referring specifically to building quality relationships with other individuals; 3) Autonomy, meaning a sense of independence in thought and action; 4) Environment mastery, referring to skill in handling various complicated environmental conditions and to adapt them to suit one's own needs and principles; 5) Purpose in life, which refers to the quest for satisfying personal goals and a sense of meaningfulness in life; and 6) Personal growth, meaning an ability to continue to grow and develop as a human being. For this well-being measure, Cronbach's alpha came to .769, indicating a satisfactory degree of reliability.

T-tests and correlation statistics were employed to test the hypotheses. In all the analysis performed in this study, no effort was made to eliminate outliers. Quite a few in the scholarly community have discussed the appropriateness of eliminating outliers to avoid problems in the results obtained by parametric testing, and the decision to discard outliers or not depends on circumstances (Grace-Martin, n.d.). Our decision was reached due to the fact that the measures of Facebook attributes tend to be extraordinarily broad and the extremes can represent real values. For example, Facebook allows a maximum of 5,000 friends, and it is quite possible that a student could have recruited this many online friends.

Findings

This study explores Facebook users' belief concerning what others think of their Facebook online self. Six hypotheses were proposed. The findings were presented as follows:

Facebook usage

There were large differences in the intensity of Facebook usage among students in the two countries, as shown in Table 1. For example, on average, Thai students reported checking their Facebook account more than 14 times daily (M = 14.15, SD = 17.80) whereas US students checked their account only 4 times each day (M = 4.02, SD = 3.94) or only one-tenth of the frequency of Thai college students. Thai students also claimed to post more than 8 posts on Facebook each month (M = 8.46, SD = 15.6) but US students reported posting on their account slightly less than 4 times monthly (M = 3.94, SD = 7.20). Similarly, on average US students spent only 1.45 hours each day on Facebook (M = 1.45, SD = 1.81) while Thai students reported spending 4.32 hours daily (M = 4.32, SD = 4.29). Finally, Thai students specified the total number of Facebook friends at about 971 (M = 971.05, SD = 1090.76) as compared with about 607 friends claimed by US students (M = 607.18, SD = 442.12). All differences among these Facebook usage characteristics were significant.

Table 1 Comparison of Thai and US University Students' Facebook Usage

	Thai		US				
Facebook activities	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t value*	*df*	*p**
Number of times Facebook account checked each day	14.15	17.80	4.02	5.12	7.78	233.01a	<.001
Number of posts on Facebook per month	8.46	15.63	3.94	7.20	3.742	280.75a	<.001
Hours spent on Facebook per day	4.32	4.26	1.45	1.81	8.83	269.36a	<.001
Number of Facebook friends	971.05	1090.7	607.18	442.12	4.40	263.74a	<.001

[a] Levene's test for equality of variance was significant; therefore, df was adjusted to account for the inequality of variance.

*two-tailed test.

Self-representation

Expecting a greater desire for public approval among Thai students than among US students, we offered *H1: Thai university students report greater discrepancy between their real self and their online self than US students*. Discrepancy was calculated by subtracting their real self scores from their online self scores (Discrepancy = Online-Real) on each of the 15 items. Hence, positive mean scores meant that students' online self was rated more positively than their real self, and negative mean scores meant that their online self was rated more negatively than their real self. Table 2 presents the results of t-tests comparing students responses in the two counties. For every item of the 15 semantic differential scales, there were significant differences between students in the two sites, but exactly opposite to the direction hypothesized. In every case, US students reported a greater discrepancy between their real self and their online self, always presenting them selves more positively on Facebook. The difference in self-presentation was especially large for the anxious-calm and unattractive-attractive scales. Thai students, on the other hand, claimed little difference between their online and real selves. A composite measure of difference was formed by summing each of the item values, and it was also significantly different between students in the two countries.

Table 2 Comparison of Discrepancies between Online and Real Self among Thai and US University Students

Discrepancy between online and real self	Thai		US		*t*	*df*	*p**
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*			
Shy v. Outgoing	0.21	1.58	0.95	1.27	-5.22	385a	<.001
Reserved v. Talkative	-0.08	1.59	0.38	1.60	-2.91	408	.004
Unfriendly v Friendly	-0.06	1.54	0.43	1.01	-3.87	345a	<.001
Impolite v. Polite	0.02	1.59	0.38	1.14	-2.67	364a	.008
Tense v. Relaxed	0.09	1.55	1.00	1.54	-6.01	408	<.001
Anxious v. Calm	0.30	1.66	1.71	1.61	-8.75	408	<.001
Unreliable v. Reliable	-0.06	1.34	0.58	1.18	-5.10	408	<.001
Unambitious v. Ambitious	-0.04	1.29	0.59	1.10	-5.36	408	<.001
Unadventurous v. Adventurous	-0.10	1.29	0.68	1.17	-6.41	408	<.001
Uncreative v. Creative	0.07	1.40	0.48	1.09	-3.32	379a	.001
Not funny v. Funny	0.07	1.44	0.65	1.23	-4.43	408	<.001
Unintelligent v. Intelligent	0.02	1.31	0.74	1.00	-6.23	408	<.001
Shallow v. Deep	-0.03	1.50	0.26	1.19	-2.23	408	.026
Physically unattractive v. Attractive	0.11	1.36	1.23	1.21	-8.83	408	<.001
Unlikable v. Likable	-0.10	1.24	0.80	1.03	-8.01	408	<.001
Summed discrepancy between online and real self	0.41	11.33	10.88	9.88	-9.98	408	<.001

[a] Levene's test for equality of variance was significant; therefore, *df* was adjusted to account for the inequality of variance.

*two-tailed test.

We anticipated that Thai students would report a larger difference between their real selves and how others perceived them online. This relationship was posed in *H2: Thai university students report higher discrepancy between their real self and how others see them online than US students*. Once more, we subtracted their real self scores from their perceived self scores (Discrepancy = Perceived-Real) on each of the 15 items. Thus, a positive mean score meant that their perceived self was rated more positively than their real self, and a negative mean score meant that their perceived self was rated more negatively than their real self report. Again this was tested by multiple t-tests of each bi-polar adjective in the semantic differential scale. Table 3 shows the results. Here the findings were mixed, with about half of the

items and the overall composite comparison not significant. However, for all items where a significant difference was found, the Thai students believed they were perceived more negatively online than their US counterparts. Indeed, for every one of the scale items, Thai students indicated that they were seen less favorably online than their real selves, whereas on a few dimensions US students believed they were seen more positively online than their actual selves.

Table 3 Comparison of Discrepancies between Perceived and Real Self among Thai and US University Students

Discrepancy between perceived and real self	Thai		US		*t*	*df*	*p**
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*			
Shy v. Outgoing	0.25	1.72	0.15	1.34	0.61	380a	n.s.
Reserved v. Talkative	-0.01	1.79	-0.11	1.60	0.57	408	n.s.
Unfriendly v Friendly	-0.46	1.85	-0.13	1.06	-2.15	318a	.033
Impolite v. Polite	-0.43	1.49	-0.13	1.12	-2.31	372a	.022
Tense v. Relaxed	-0.34	1.77	0.37	1.43	-4.44	386a	<.001
Anxious v. Calm	-0.09	1.71	0.88	1.58	-5.97	408	<.001
Unreliable v. Reliable	-0.45	1.44	-0.23	1.14	-1.67	383a	n.s.
Unambitious v. Ambitious	-0.13	1.42	-0.33	1.34	1.42	408	n.s.
Unadventurous v. Adventurous	-0.20	1.66	-0.33	1.35	0.83	387a	n.s.
Uncreative v. Creative	-0.23	1.42	-0.31	1.14	0.66	385a	n.s.
Not funny v. Funny	-0.22	1.54	-0.30	1.17	0.60	375a	n.s.
Unintelligent v. Intelligent	-0.17	1.45	-0.23	1.04	0.42	364a	n.s.
Shallow v. Deep	-0.11	1.55	-0.51	1.28	2.82	389a	.005
Physically unattractive v. Attractive	-0.19	1.30	0.11	0.93	-2.66	364a	0.008
Unlikable v. Likable	-0.29	1.28	0.00	1.00	-2.53	380a	0.012
Summed discrepancy between perceived and real self	-3.07	12.36	-1.10	9.35	-1.82	374a	n.s.

[a] Levene's test for equality of variance was significant; therefore, *df* was adjusted to account for the inequality of variance. ; *n.s.* indicates differences were not significant.

*two-tailed test.

In addition, comparisons between online self-presentations and respondents' belief about others' perceptions was conducted as stated in *H3: Thai university students report higher discrepancy between their online self and how others see them online than US students*. Finally, we subtracted students' online self scores from their perceived self scores (Discrepancy = Perceived-Online) on each of the 15 items. A positive mean score meant that their perceived self was rated more positively than their online self, while a negative mean score meant that their perceived self was more negative than their online self. The finding revealed that for all items, US students reported they were perceived more negatively than they presented themselves online. Thai students reported the same on all but two semantic differential scales. However, the discrepancy between the two groups studied was greater for US students in all but three scales. The composite discrepancy comparison between Thai and US student was also significant. Please see Table 4.

Table 4 Comparison of Discrepancies between Perceived and Online Self among Thai and US University Students

Discrepancy between perceived and real self	Thai		US		*t*	*df*	*p**
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*			
Shy v. Outgoing	0.03	1.69	-0.80	1.46	5.35	408	<.001
Reserved v. Talkative	0.07	1.83	-0.49	1.76	3.13	408	.002
Unfriendly v Friendly	-0.39	1.68	-0.57	1.00	1.29	326a	n.s.
Impolite v. Polite	-0.45	1.55	-0.51	0.99	0.50	340a	n.s.
Tense v. Relaxed	-0.43	1.62	-0.64	1.59	1.32	408	n.s.
Anxious v. Calm	-0.39	1.60	-0.83	1.54	2.85	408	.005
Unreliable v. Reliable	-0.39	1.50	-0.81	1.29	3.06	408	.002
Unambitious v. Ambitious	-0.09	1.51	-0.92	1.30	5.93	408	<.001
Unadventurous v. Adventurous	-0.10	1.49	-1.01	1.34	6.47	408	<.001
Uncreative v. Creative	-0.30	1.49	-0.79	1.30	3.59	408	<.001
Not funny v. Funny	-0.29	1.59	-0.95	1.34	4.58	392a	<.001
Unintelligent v. Intelligent	-0.19	1.47	-0.96	1.08	6.04	369a	<.001
Shallow v. Deep	-0.08	1.56	-0.77	1.32	4.89	408	<.001
Physically unattractive v. Attractive	-0.30	1.47	-1.12	1.14	6.32	379	<.001
Unlikable v. Likable	-0.19	1.36	-0.80	1.02	5.20	408	<.001
Summed discrepancy between perceived and online self	-3.49	12.93	-11.98	11.18	7.12	408	<.001

[a] Levene's test for equality of variance was significant; therefore, df was adjusted to account for the inequality of variance.; n.s. indicates differences were not significant.

*two-tailed test.

For tests of hypotheses 4 through 6, data from both study sites were aggregated and correlation analyses were preformed using overall summed discrepancy values and summed values of the 18 well-being items. Table 5 shows the results of testing hypotheses 4, 5, and 6.

H4: The discrepancy between users' real self and online self is positively associated with psychological well-being. Looking at composite summed values for the 15-item set among all students, there was a significant positive association between the discrepancy between self-presentation and real self with well-being. This indicates that when students offered online presentations more favorable than their actual self, they tended to exhibit higher well-being scores. Hypothesis 4 was therefore confirmed.

Table 5 Correlation of Well-Being with Discrepancies between Online and Real Self, Perceived and Real Self, and Perceived and Online Self among Thai and US University Students

	Well-being	Discrepancy online-real self	Discrepancy perceived-real self	Discrepancy perceived-online self
Well-being	1	.155**	-.013	-.155**
Discrepancy online-real self		1	.373**	-.605**
Discrepancy perceived-real self			1	.513**
Discrepancy perceived-online self				1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Hypothesis 5 examined the relationship between real and online discrepancies and well-being. *H5: The discrepancy between users' real self and how others see them online is negatively associated with psychological well-being*. As Table 5 reveals, correlation between this discrepancy and well-being was not significant, and thus well-being was not shown to be related to differences in real and perceived selves. Hypothesis 5 was thus not supported. Even so, there was a significant positive association between well-being and the discrepancy between online self-presentations and actual self. That is, those who exhibited higher well-being scores also tended to present themselves more positively on Facebook than their real self.

At the same time, for composite summed values among all students, there was a significant negative association of the discrepancy between

self-presentation and others' perceptions and well-being, as proposed by our study: *H6: The discrepancy between users' online self and how others see them online is negatively associated with psychological well-being*. This showed that as the discrepancy between the way students presented themselves online and the way they were seen by other grew larger, they tended to exhibit lower well-being. Hypothesis 6 consequently was confirmed.

Discussion

The differences between Thai and US students in intensity of Facebook use was striking, we were able to compare results in this study with a related study completed a few years earlier (Magpanthong & McDaniel, 2015). From this comparison, it was discovered that there was a slight decrease in the mean number of hours US students spent on Facebook from 1.85 hours to 1.45, but there was a large increase in time devoted to this platform by Thai students, from 2.87 hours to 4.32 hours daily. This trend deserves further investigation.

Findings regarding differences between actual self and online self-presentation are similar to those of previous studies. Toma and Carlson (2015) found that participants rated their online profiles to be more positive than their actual selves on some attributes but on other attributes accurate or even less positive. What we found in this study was that US students chose to present their online selves rather more positively than their real life, particularly suggesting that they were less anxious and more attractive than they actually were. However, Thai students presented themselves online little different from their real selves as their discrepancy scores were slightly negative. Were these results related to cultural factors? This calls for further investigation.

An interesting point found in the present study was that, even though US students claimed that their online self-presentations were more positive than their real selves, they did not report that they were consistently seen more positively online by others. This resulted from the fact that all 15 discrepancies between semantic differential item scores of their online self and their perceived self were negative. This suggests that although US students offered inflated images of themselves, they believed that Facebook friends tended to be skeptical of their online self-presentations. The same pattern was evident among Thai students too and their discrepancy scores were negative for all but two of the semantic differential items, though the summed discrepancy value was much smaller than among US students. Perhaps this reflects a predisposition to mistrust online presentations or possibly a cynicism about how friends are seen on social media. In any case, Thai students claimed to present themselves online more accurately. Even so, in both nations students believed that they were seen less positively by other users on Facebook than they portrayed themselves online.

Thus in this study, we proposed two possible theoretical explanations for the pattern of results obtained—"social media literacy" and an "online life insecurity syndrome." It appears that no matter which nation, these young adults grew up with the Internet as part of their everyday lives, and so they were likely socialized to expect false online presentations. Hence, Facebook friends were not to be entirely trusted; people can easily disguise their real selves or exaggerate their achievements and

quality of life. Thus, caution in accepting the accuracy of presentations on Facebook might be a normal part of "social media literacy" common among young adults of this generation. In this theoretical proposition, social media literacy refers to how well social media users could identify the intentions, credibility, and trustworthiness of the online message sources. In this study, US students seemed more prone to such distrust, though why this was so is not clear.

At the same time, these youthful participants definitely would feel vulnerable to opinions formed about their online self-presentations. No matter whether accurate or exaggerated, their presentations would be critically—and sometimes savagely—judged by their Facebook friends. The researchers termed this phenomenon, "online life insecurity syndrome." Their susceptibility to criticism is evident in the finding that well-being was negatively associated with discrepancies between their online self-presentations and the way others perceived them. This fear of being cynically and harshly judged by their online friends would naturally make students feel insecure about themselves and their lives. For those who exhibited the "online life insecurity syndrome," it would be worthwhile to investigate what caused them to feel unconfident by judgments made by their online friends. Could it be that their Facebook profile or their posts were often subject to harsh comments? It can be observed that the discrepancies between their online self-presentations and their perceived selves were negative in 14 of the 15 items among Thai students and in all items among US students. Therefore, it appears that although US students posted presentations of themselves more favorable than their real lives, they were aware that their Facebook friends knew that what they presented was not an accurate description of their true selves. Even among Thai respondents, it seems that they expected their online friends to rate their actual lives lower than their online self-presentations. This deserves additional investigation.

The association between well-being and the discrepancy scores among real self-presentation, online presentation, and perceived selves was interesting. The correlation between real and online discrepancies and well-being might indicate that those with higher self-reported life satisfaction were more likely to enhance their online self-presentation. At the same time, it may be that when students thought that their online self-presentation did not produce a corresponding improvement in others' perceptions of them, their well-being was negatively affected. If so, this would suggest an association between skepticism about online presentations and decreased life satisfaction. However, these correlation analyses cannot point to cause and effect, and so additional exploration in future research will be needed.

In conclusion, this research provides previously unknown details about the difference between US and Thai college students in their use of Facebook. Findings looked specifically at discrepancies between their real self and online presentations as well as discrepancies between what they intended to present online and how they thought other Facebook users perceived them. The contrasts found in this study could be explored further, perhaps via qualitative research methods such as in-depth

interviews or focus group discussions. Such a study might illuminate Facebook users' beliefs, especially whether they are aware of the "online life insecurity syndrome" or whether they feel a need for knowledge on "social media literacy." Future research area could also delve more deeply into the cultural differences in online behaviors between the collectivist and individualist societies exemplified in this study, as this survey discovered some significant differences between Asian and Western Facebook users.

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